# Life's a Hoot!

*The International Owl Collectors' Club,*
*54 Tiverton Road, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6BE, England.*

Hello! Welcome to issue six. The club continues to grow and we now have over 150 members, even allowing for the few we have lost because they didn't renew their memberships. We have members in two more countries now - Denmark and the Ukraine.

If you joined with issue three, this is your fourth newsletter and so your subscription renewal is due. If so, it will say so on your envelope. Current prices are STOP PRESS - PLEASE SEE ENCLOSED NOTE. Please re-subscribe if applicable, as I cannot afford to send any issues to lapsed members. Remember that I can only take £ and $ (American) but that if it is too expensive or difficult for you to get these I will accept owl items instead. Do send something for publication if you can and any suggestions you may have, too.

One of our Australian members (I forget which one) said that owl items are hard to get in her country, because there are no native owls. I hope the article G'day, Owls disabuses her of that notion. As well as all the owls mentioned Australia also has some birds called Frog-Mouthed Owlets which are so adorable that I for one am going to stretch a point and include them in my collection. I'm also very taken by how much the African Pearl Spotted Owl looks like a Snowy Owl - I wonder if it has similar feathery feet or if the heat in Africa makes it differ that way. Anyone know?

If you have sent for Owl club badges or mirrors and have not received them yet, please accept my apologies. This computer that I work on has had a number of problems and I am lucky that my husband has been able to get it working well enough for me to do this issue. However, if you asked me for anything more than a month ago and have not received a reply, please write again as with so much mail I sometimes get confused about which letters I have answered!

I thought I had the ultimate owl item when Rowena, who was on holiday in Hong Kong, sent me two watches, one in the shape of an owl and one with an owl on the face, but I think I've been beaten by Peter Dearsley who has a loo seat with a hollow tree on the top and an owl on the underside!

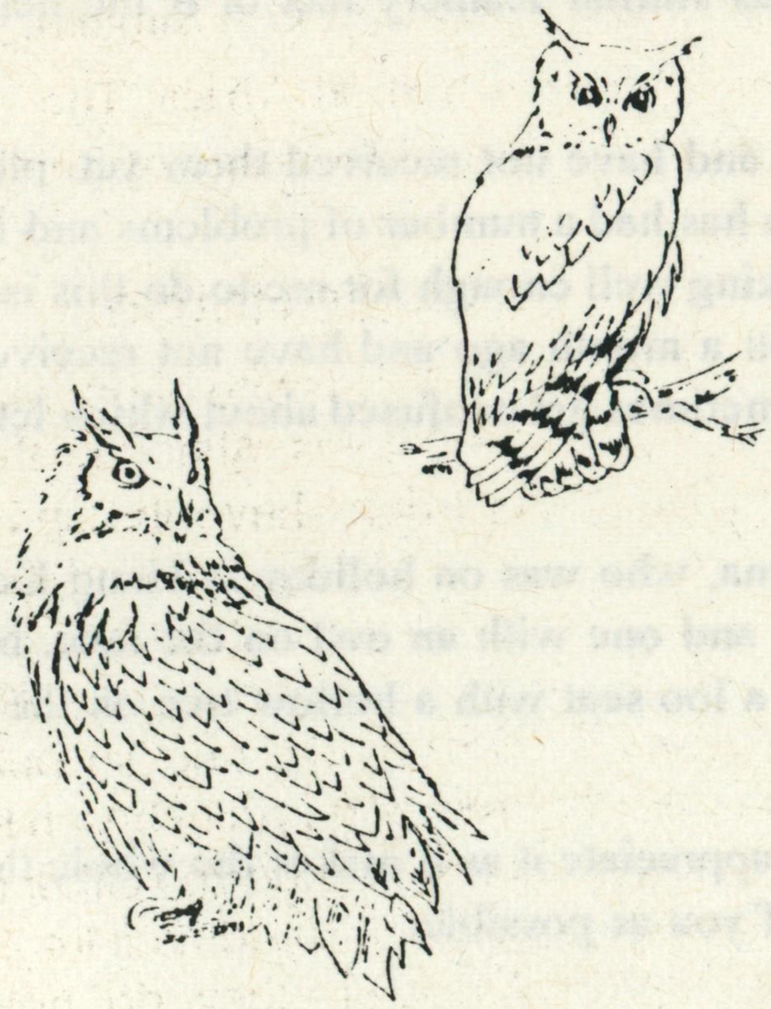
Thanks very much to all the contributors - I really appreciate it as it makes the whole thing much more interesting if we hear from as many of you as possible.

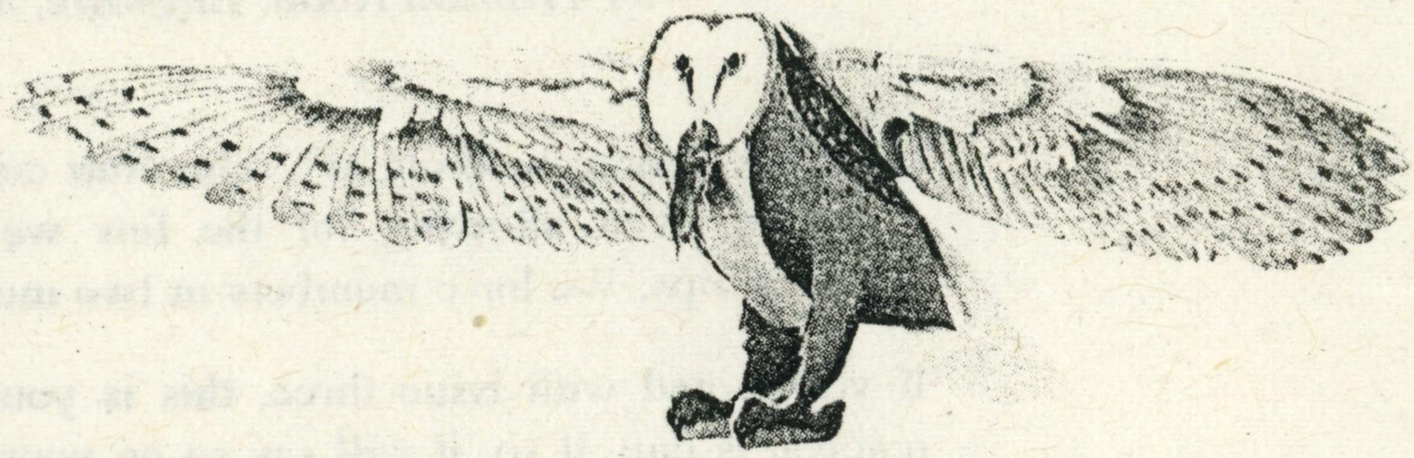
Now read on.

*Elise.*

## Owls for Sale

**This time we have some postcards for you to buy to help the various owl charities we support. They are about 6 inches by 4 inches (15 cm by 10 cm), on thin pastel coloured card and show one of these drawings on one side and on the other the word 'Postcard' and a pen symbol dividing the two sides so that there is an area for the message and one for the address. They come in sets of 12, mixed colours and pictures. A set costs £2 in Europe, $4 in America and £3 or $6 (American $) in the rest of the world, to allow for the extra postage. As always I will acept owl items in trade if American $ and British £ are too difficult or costly for you to get.**





## *Quaker Auction*

*Have you tried Quaker Oat Krunchies? Here in Britain they have been doing a campaign in association with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which involves them printing a bird of pray mobile on the inside of their packets. One of the birds is a barn owl, and the very nice people at Quaker Oats Limited have given us ten of these packets so that we can raise money by one of our auctions. If you would like one of these mobiles (made-up size about 13.5" by 5", 33cm by 14 cm) send your bid in by the 1st of December. If you are one of the top bids, I will send you the packet and you must then send the money you promised. Please remember that I can only take British Pounds or American Dollars, but am willing to accept owl items to the relevant value and put the money in for you instead.*

# More on U is for Owl

For our newer members, perhaps I should explain why this section is called U is for Owl. It is because Rowena, in Germany, sent me an alphabet stamp of an owl with a letter U for Uhu, the eagle owl. Since then we have been 'collecting' owl words in different languages. Here's a list from Winifred, our South African member, showing the Afrikaans and some tribal words. They are such lovely words!

I can't get the tabulation working, so each one reads as follows: Type (in English), Distribution, Afrikaans word, Tribal word(s).

Barn Owl, Throughout the country, Nonnetjie-uil, Isikhova (X) Sephooko (S)

Grass Owl, Eastern border, Grasuil, Isikhova (X)

Marsh Owl, Eastern border and a band in the North from East to West, Vlei-uil, Chidyizimbori (D)

Wood Owl, Eastern seaboard, Bosuil, isi-Kova-esincani (G)

Scops Owl, Sub-tropic to tropics in North, Skopsuil, Kharivisanyre (Ch)

White Faced Owl, North of the Orange River, Witwang uil

Pearl-spotted Owl, North of the Orange River, Witkol uil, Mundungulu (Z)

Barred Owl, North Eastern Transvaal, Gebande uil

Cape Eagle Owl, Eastern coast line, Kaapse Ooruil

Spotted Eagle Owl, Throughout, Gevlekte Ooruil, Isihuluhulu (X) isi-Kova (Z & G) Mophooe (Ch) le-Siviri (S) i-Kiwikwi (D)

Giant Eagle Owl, Throughout except Cape West of Port Elizabeth, Reuse Ooruil, Ifibusi (X) Morubisi (Ch) isi-Kova-isikulu (G) i-Zizi (D)

Fishing Owl, Natal Coast, Visuil, i-Fukesi (Z)

Tribe Abbreviations:

X = Xhosa; Z = Zulu; S = Sotho; Ch = Chuana; D = Chindao; G = Singuni.

Chuana and Chindao live to the North in Mozambique and Central Africa. The others are South African tribes. Afrikaans is the second official language of South Africa and is similar to Dutch.

## Topical Philatelic House

The Topical Philatelic House, Inc., is one of our members (!) and has some lovely owl items. Although the ones shown here (not full size, I don't have the space) are expensive, they are rare collectors items and they also have covers, postal stationery, postcards, mint and souvenir sheets and many other special philatelic items (that's basically stamps, postmarks and so on). They work by sending you 'approvals' on your chosen topics - that means sending you the items and you either buying them or sending them back by insured mail (registered air mail from outside America). They do not have ordinary stamps except in the better sets and rare singles. If you would like more information and a list of topics (one of which is owls, of course), write to Topical Philatelic House, Inc., 5 East Long Street, P.O. Box 15158, Columbus, Ohio 43215, U.S.A.

# G'day, Owls!

## by Ann Fuller, Australia

I thought you might be interested in the live owl population of Australia. There are four species of Hawk owls and five of Masked owls in Australia.

**Hawk Owls:**

Vision is most acutely developed in the hawk owls and their hunting technique is to quarter the ground systematically like the hawks, searching for prey. Feet are feathered. Females are larger than males.

1) Boobook Owl. The smallest and most familiar of Australian owls. Plumage and size vary greatly. Habitat is varied but is particularly partial to eucalypt forest and woodlands. It hunts mostly at nightfall and before dawn and preys on mice, sparrows and other small birds. It draws in its feathers under threat and turns sideways to present a thin profile. Its leisurely two-syllable call, though soft in tone, can carry for several kilometres. Has been described as 'mo-poke', 'boo-book' and 'wook-wook'.

2) Rufous Owl. Restricts its territory to the tropical North and grows to 50cm. Call is soft, low 'woo-hoo'.

3) Barking Owl. Also called "winking owl" (but all owls wink). The most hawklike of the Australian owls, relying almost wholly on sight for hunting. Frequents woodland and open forest. Grows to about 43cm, and voice is a loud barking 'Wook-wook' and bloodcurdling 'screaming woman' calls.

4) Powerful Owl. Australia's largest owl, growing to 65cm with a wingspan of 1 meter. Preys on possums, gliders and quite large birds such as kookaburras and currawongs. Always nests over 15m above ground. Voice is drawn-out, double-note 'whooo-hooo'

**Masked Owls**

Sometimes known as "monkey faced" owls, they are characterised by their large heart-shaped facial masks and dark eyes. They have short tails, long feathered legs and a

**serrated grip under the middle claw. Their eyes tend to be smaller and perhaps catch less light than those of the Hawk Owls, but their hearing is more acute and is highly directional.**

**1) Masked Owl. The largest and most powerful of the genus Tyto in Australia and the female of the Tasmanian race is the largest in the world (57cm). The Masked Owl feeds on terrestrial mammals up to the size of rabbits. The giant Tasmanian bird when on the defensive spreads its wings downwards, rocks from side to side, snaps its beak, hisses, fixes the intruder with a hostile stare - and makes a truly fearsome spectacle. Voice is drawn-out, rasping or hissing screech.**

**2&3) Sooty Owl (female 51cm) and Lesser Sooty Owl (female 38cm). These thick-set and robust owls have the largest eyes of any masked owl. They live in dense, gloomy habitats, hence the eyes. Voices are weird, swooping whistles.**

**4) Barn Owl. This pale owl is nearly world-wide, using its remarkable gifts of hearing rather than sight Voice is eerie, drawn-out screeching.**

**5) Eastern Grass Owl. This rarely seen long-legged owl lives out its whole life on the ground and frequents grass-land, swampy heath, canegrass or reeds. Normally hunts at dusk, but will hunt by day when food is scarce. Nests under dense deep tussocks. Voice is like Barn Owl but softer, deeper and less vocal.**

## Charity Corner.

Here's a brief review of offerings from three charites in Britian that support owls in one way or another.

First of all, our friends the Hawk and Owl trust, The National Centre for Owl Conservation, Wolterton Park, Erpingham, Norwich, NR11 7LY, England. Prices include U.K. postage and packing, and they will send overseas on request and will quote prices if you ask. For example, they have a Barn Owl tie (£11), two Barn Owl T-shirts in M, L and XL (£9.99 each), a diary (£4.50), two owl Christmas cards (5 for £2.30) and Owl writing paper (£2.50).

As you might expect, the Christmas catalogue from the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) has some lovely owls. The 8" by 6" European owls diary (£5.99) is full of paintings and drawings, there is a cartoon owls sweatshirt (£16.50), a set of six tiny ceramic owls (£3.99) and a barn owl sweatshirt (£16.50) amongst other things. For a catalogue, write to RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., England.

The Lifewatch catalogue from London Zoo is also quite Owly, featuring white ceramic bookends (£39.95), a pewter-ended bookmark (£7.95) , a cruet set (£27.50), a tapestry cushion kit (£38.50), a candle-snuffer (27.50), a wonderful crystal carving (£54.95) and more. For a catalogue call 091 514 2777.

# The Wise Owl In Philately
## by W. T. Clover, Spain

To the Ancient Greeks Athene was the goddess of wisdom and often associated with her was a Little Owl, which was therefore held in sacred reverence by the citizens of ancient Athens and from whom it gets its scientific name of Athene Noctua. This connection can be seen in a Greek stamp of 1959 and of 1963, which both feature the two sides of an old Greek coin, one side showing the goddess and the other the Little Owl.

Due to this close connection with Athene all owls, not just the Little Owl, became connected in Western culture with wisdom and learning. Thus the owl became a useful symbol for educational establishments and institutions.

In 1987 Greece issued a booklet of ten stamps commemorating the 150th anniversary of Athens University; both booklet and stamps featured a stylised owl (Fig 1). Due to space restrictions, the figures are not actual size (ed).

Fig 1

Similarly stylised owls can be found on a 1975 stamp from Rwanda for the 10th anniversary of their National University, a 1976 Belgian stamp to mark the 125th anniversary of the Wilhems Foundation (Flemish Cultural Organisation) and in 1991 a Belgian stamp to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Le Pensee et Les Hommes organisation.

Postmarks often feature owls when connected with educational organisations. For example in my collection I have covers from Poland, one with an owl cancellation promoting the 3rd Polish National Congress of Scientific Organisations in Warsaw in 1970 and another with a cancellation used during the Congress of Graduates of the Stanislawa Staszice School of General Education, Trzcianke in 1985 (Figs 2 and 3).

FIG 2

I also have four U.S. covers which, while not featuring an owl stamp, do

Fig 3

have owls in the cancellations, all of which refer to the wisdom or educational theme surrounding owls. (Figs 4 to 7).

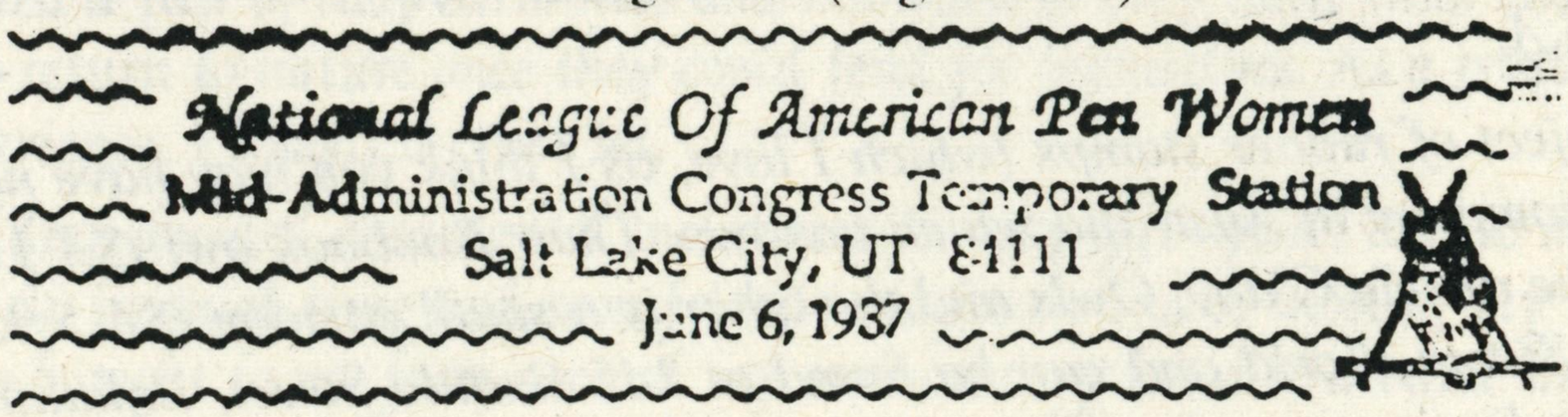



Fig 4

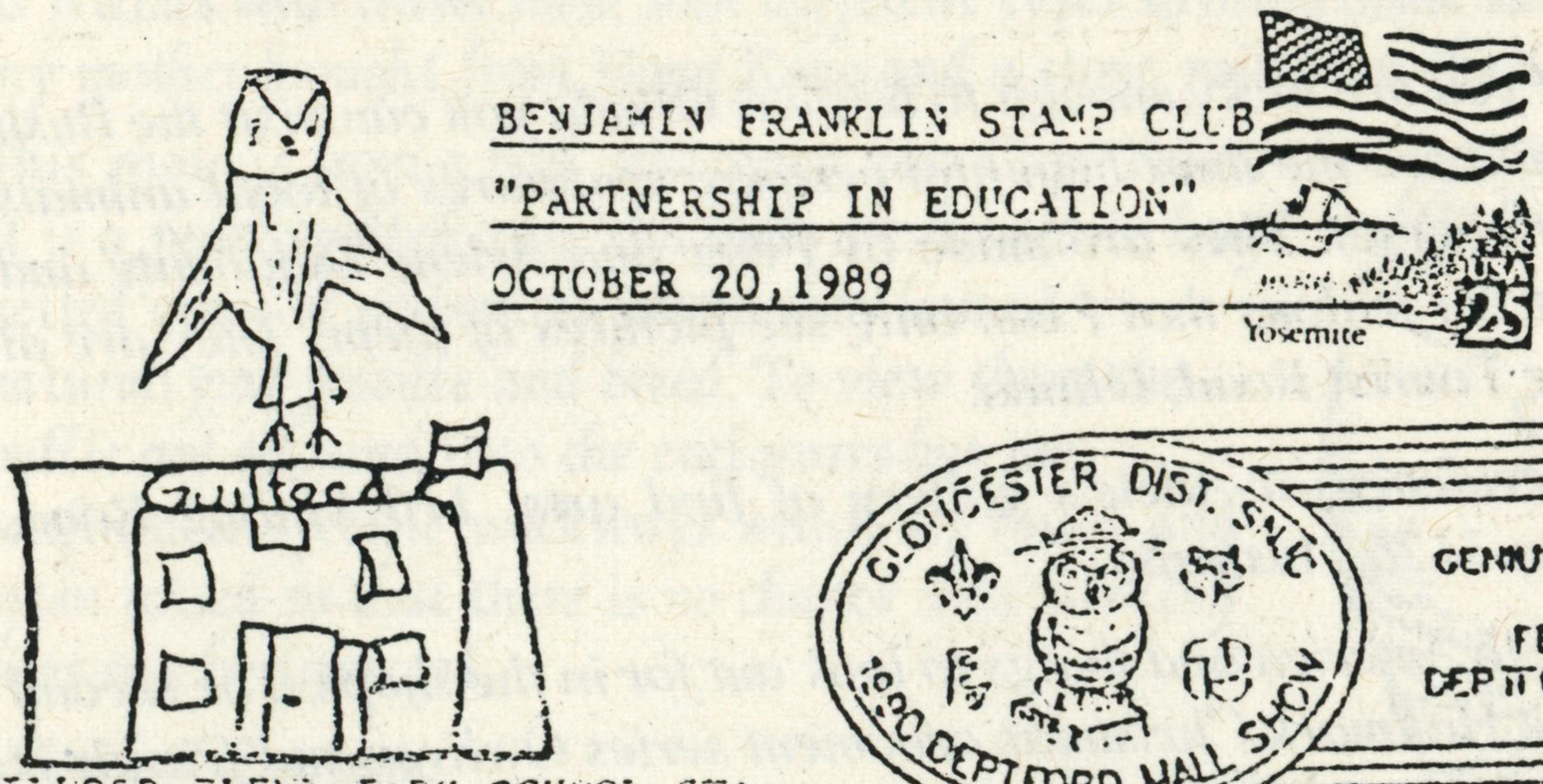



Fig 5

Fig 6

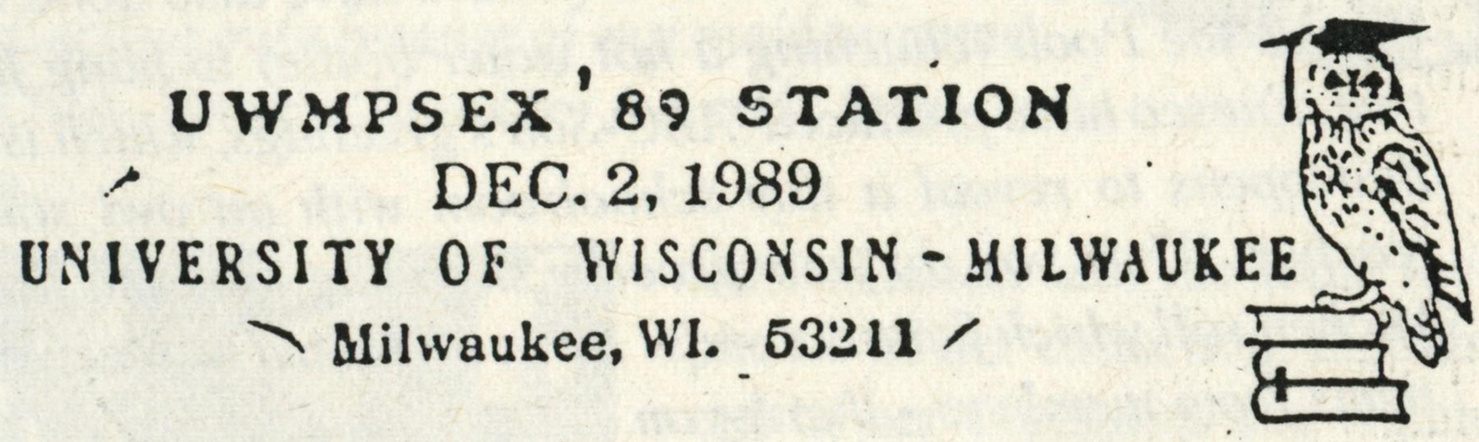



Fig 7

The owl has even been used to promote road safety, as the Yorkshire (England) city of Leeds used an owl alongside its postmark slogan "Leeds Says Be Wise Look Before Crossing".

## *Owls Seen Around*

*Have you seen the new Owl's Nest catalogue? If not you should! It contains some really special items - I was particularly drawn to the owl afghan knee rug - but as usual it is just packed with good things, all featuring owls. They have lots of lovely Christmas ornaments and some cards, too. A catalogue subscription costs $5 for three issues and is well worth it. Donna, who runs the company, is one of our members and has introduced a lot of others so we appriciate her! Write to: The Owl's Nest, P.O. Box 990, Depoe Bay, OR 97341-0990, USA.*

*Also in the USA is a friendly little company called Creative Rubber Stamps (actually it might be a big company but it gives wonderful personal service). They have seven charming owl stamps (two shown on this page) and will send them pretty much anywhere. Their catalogue costs $3, plus $3.75 postage if you are outside America. Write to: Creative rubber stamps, P.O. Box 55264, Portland, OR 97238, U.S.A.*

*On the subject of rubber stamps (which I love, as I think you may have noticed), there is a company in Australia which has two. Their Boobook owl ($A 11.50) is shown in the article G'day, Owls and the other is a small cartoon ($A 5.95) They are called Stamp World and can be found at 145 Beattle Street, Balmain, NSW 2041, Australia.*

*Also in Australia, if you are lucky enough to be near Olinda you can visit the Bush Creatures gallery and see the most beautiful ceramic sculptures of local animals (including Owls, of course). They are made by Peter and Arlene Delahenty and look so special that I'm jealous that I can only see pictures of them! They are at 545 Mt. Dandenong Tourist Road, Olinda.*

*Owls are also in evidence at Adele's gallery of find arts, 110 Maling Road, Canterbury, Victoria 3126, Australia.*

*Back to America and things to look out for in the shops. The second in the Hallmark Christmas ornament series Owliver and friends is out, and it is Owliver (a baby owl) asleep on a branch with a squirrel leaving him a present. Hallmark have also done Owl from Winnie the Pooh (clutching a hot water bottle) to hang from your tree. Enesco have produced 'ABC-Son's greetings, which is an apple that opens to reveal a tiny schoolroom with an owl student and teacher. When you do your grocery shopping look out for Wildlife kitchen roll which features owls! I was delighted to receive all these items from members - thank-you.*

*We seem to have ignored Britian a bit here, but see the articles An Owl-coholic in York and Charity Corner. In addition, Border Fine Arts (try any British china shop) have a new series just starting called Owls of the World, which begins with a 3.5 inch Barn Owl with a baby under her wing at £34.95*

# Owl Mail

This is from one of our Australian members:

Another hobby of mine is writing poems and such and I couldn't resist making up a limerick about an owl.

There once was a barn owl named Hoot
Whose head was as bald as a coot.
Without a top feather
He didn't know whether
To wit, or to woo or to toot.
Miriam Everitt.

Here's something from South Africa:

I am an owlie by default really but I am thoroughly hooked. My collection started in 1970 when I was on holiday in Zululand on a friend's farm. They had reared a pair of baby barn owls and managed to keep them wild enough for them to return to nature once they could fend for themselves. As a reminder of the experience, I bought a cruet set.

My children decided ornamental owls were an easy gift option and so my two became six in quick time and soon friends caught on and so most of my 160 odd are gifts brought to me from around my own country but also around the world as friends who travel have seen different types to bring home such as a brass one my mother brought from Hong Kong and a stone pair from the Isle of Skye.

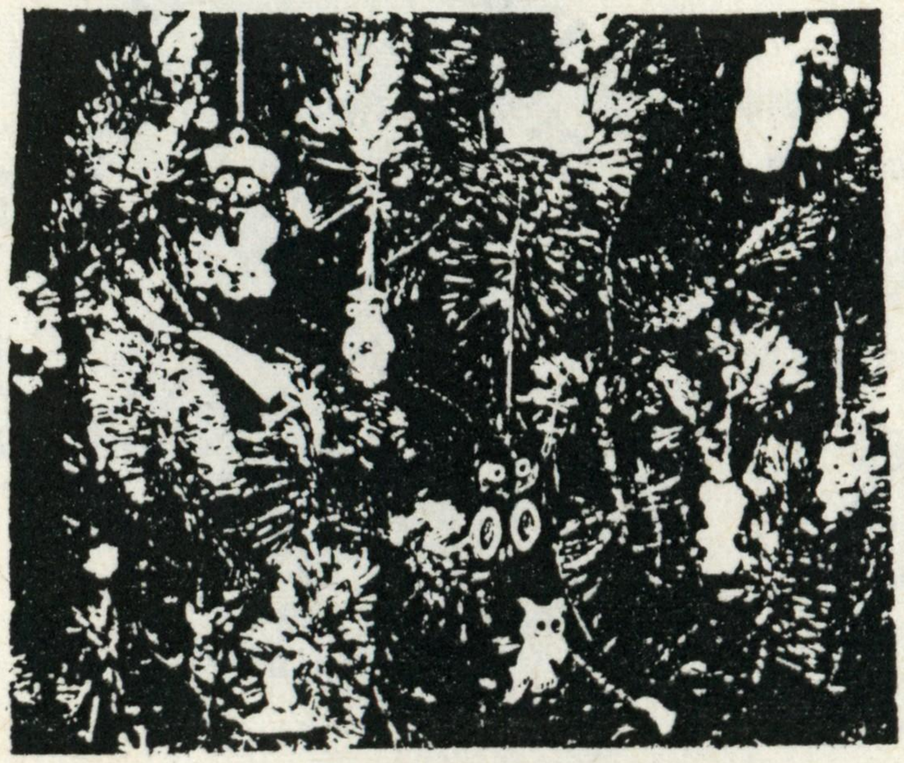
This photo is from a bird sanctuary near Cape Town. It is a pearl spotted owl. The birds are housed in huge netted areas or enclosures where they live as naturally as possible and breed. To view them the public are allowed into the enclosures but are confined to specific walkways which are railed and often raised so that there is no chance that breeding sites can be damaged.

Winifred Simpson.

Here's a great name:

I started collecting owls because of my maiden name, HROMASOVA. Hrom = Thunder A = and Sova = owl.

Dana Peska



Doris Bratton sent me some lovely photos of her collection, including this one of her Christmas tree which is totally covered with owls and nothing else - how splendid! If you are looking for owl tree ornaments, check out the 'owls seen around' in this issue.

## *The Craft Spot*

One of my other interests (apart from owls and rubber stamps) is jewellery and particularly beads. Owl beads are very hard to get hold of (although I have a few) so I thought I'd make some myself. You will need a sheet of ordinary A4 (or American Letter Size) paper and a small rubber stamp of an owl. If you don't have a suitable rubber stamp you can draw the owls by hand or use photocopies of copyright free items.

First cut a strip of paper from your sheet, cutting the long way. Make it as wide as your stamp or drawing is high. Roll this strip up tightly from one end and mark the paper where the end touches the wound part. Unroll the strip and see how big the area from the end of your strip to the mark is. If it is not large enough for your stamp you will have to try a longer strip of paper, but if you join two strips do roll up the first one, stiick it down and then start the second against the end of the first, not over it, otherwise your bead will have a bump.

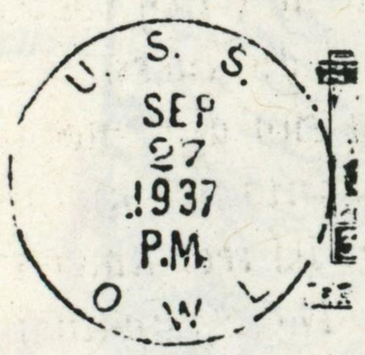
Print or draw your owl along the edge of the paper, colour it if you like and then cut the strips and roll up the beads, sticking the end down with a little PVA or other paper glue. To make the beads last better, I like to spray them with varnish. If you do so, please wear a mask when spraying as I don't want you to varnish the inside of your lungs!

## Questions and Answers

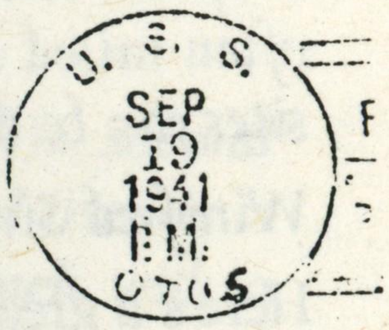
Last time we had two 'postal' queries - why the owl postmark on the Queens Yorkshire visit and why the owl on the Mathius Claudius stamp. Thanks to those who wrote with the answers.

The owl is an emblem of Leeds and is on their coat of arms, so it is a reasonable choice for that part of the visit, and was mentioned on the postmark.

Mathius Claudius was a poet and also a journalist and editor of a newspaper. The owl is part of the symbol of the publishing house he worked for.




Here's another challenge - two postmarks from American ships, the Owl and the Otus (as in Otus Scops, latin name of the long eared owl). Can anyone trace any information at all about these ships, for example what type of ships they were?




Finally, one for the German members, what are these postmarks about? Any answers will be published next time.

# An Owl-Coholic in York

York, for those of you who don't know, is a very old, walled city in the North of England. It has been there a least since Roman times and was occupied after that by Vikings. I went there for a week's holiday! It's quite small for a city, as it is only about a five mile walk to go all around its wall, but it is just packed with owls. It's also a little confusing, because the streets are called 'gates' and the city gates in the walls are called 'bars'. I never did find out what they call the bars!

When we first entered the city through Bootham bar, we saw a statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of wisdom and war, above a shop at the corner of High Petergate and Minster Gates. I thought "what a pity, she's usually shown with an owl" and moved on. When we came back that way I realised that there was an owl peeking out from behind her.

My next find was something a lot of you have been asking for - owls on men's neckties! Not far from the statue, at 33 High Petergate, is a place called 'The Shirt Shop' and it has two different owl ties, which are all over patterns of the owls shown here, for only £9.95 each. The pattern on the right is on dark blue and the one on the left is on dark green, dark blue or maroon. What's more they'll supply them to anyone anywhere and they take credit cards. Mention the IOCC if you write to them!

Walking down Davy Gate my husband spotted a lovely owl mosaic on the side of a shop called Edmund Jackson. There was no explanation of it at all but it looks pretty old.

In 1984 the South Trancept of the Minster (otherwise known as the cathedral) was destroyed by fire, and had to be rebuilt. One of the new roof bosses was designed to illustrate light and darkness, and has a pheasant and an owl with a sun and moon. You can just see it if you look up (or into the mirror provided) and have good eyesight, but I'd recommend buying a postcard to see it clearly. There's another owl in the Minster, too, carved on the tomb of Sir George Savile Bart. which is just to the left of the tower looking towards the alter.

A great source of owl items is the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust shop at 28 Blackswine Gate. I came across it by accident walking around the snickles (little pedestrian roads and passages) of York and bought so much that the lady on the till seemed to be in shock. They had lots of small owly items such as childrens' jigsaws, fridge magnets, notebooks and ornaments as well as larger things like T-shirts. Well worth a visit and they also do mail order - write for a catalogue. I love to buy my owls where the money will go to help wildlife, don't you?

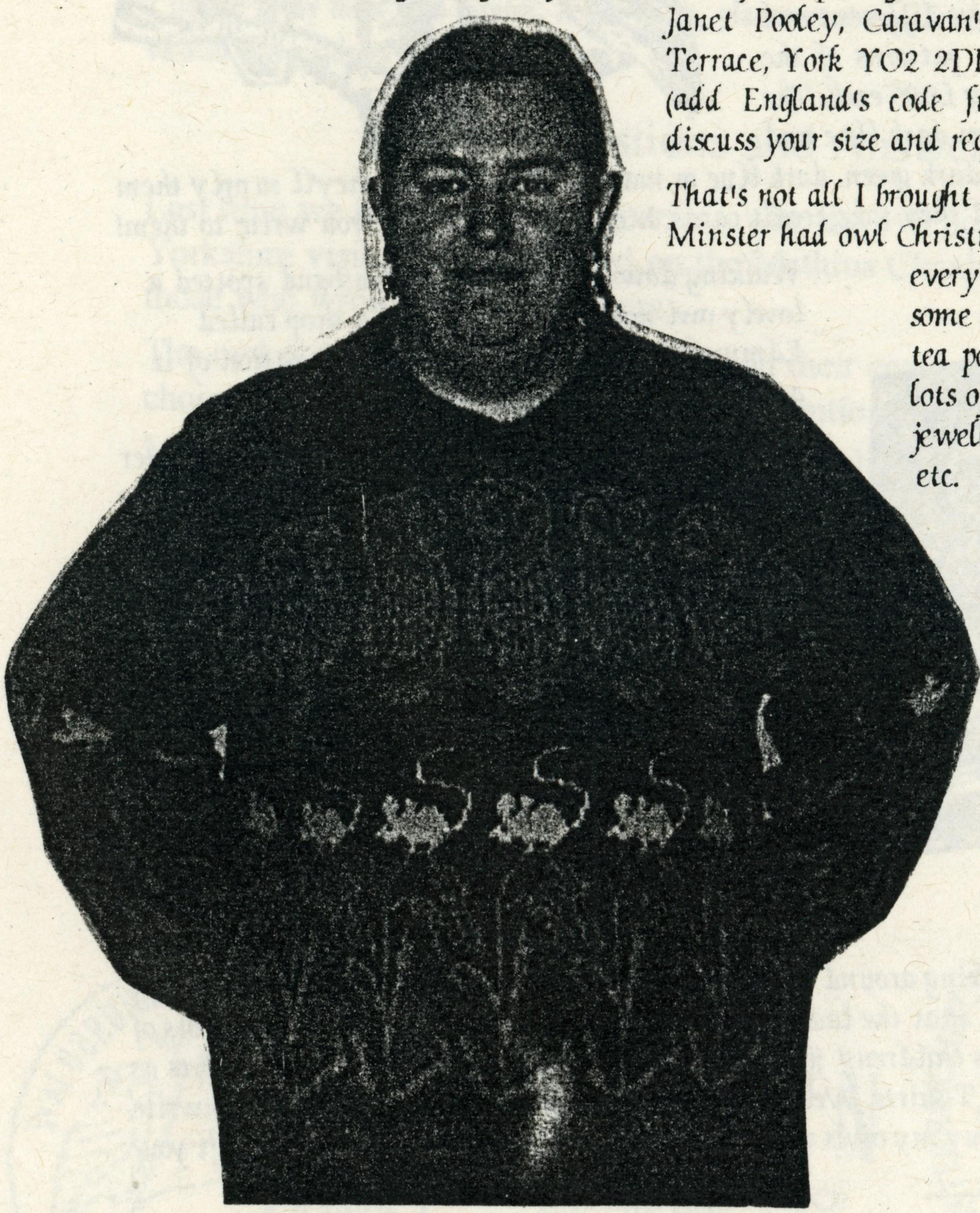
Continued on next page ——>

Fancy some porcelain owl buttons like these (4 for £4.99 + p&p)? If so you must visit or write to 'Duttons for Buttons' 32 Coppergate, York YO1 1NR. They are lovely and are washable too!

'Make your Mark' at 72 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF, have at least eight different owl rubber stamps. They're certainly worth a visit and do mail order too. The catalogue is £1 so send about £1.50 to allow for p&p.

If you pass the Antiques Centre in York, do go downstairs and visit the beautiful bronze (?) owl who came from the roof of a house in Leeds. He will probably still be there because he costs hundreds of pounds. The chap who owns the owl let me take a photo, which was very kind of him.

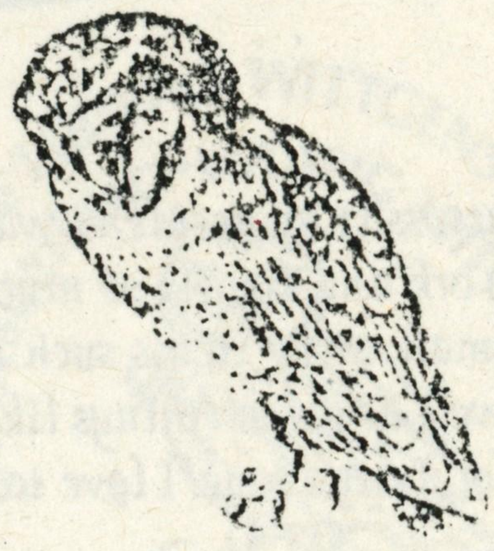
On my last day I saw a sign for a craft fair and of course went to find it. There I met a lovely lady with beautiful, pure wool jumpers with owls on! Here I am in the one I bought. They cost £32 plus p&p in small, medium and large and an extra £3 for extra large (more wool). I'm wearing a large so you can see they are quite generously sized. They are made by Janet Podey, Caravan'serai, Flat 3, 5 Driffield Terrace, York YO2 2DD. Call her on 0904 633987 (add England's code from outside, obviously) to discuss your size and requirements.



That's not all I brought back from York. The Minster had owl Christmas cards, practically every gift shop had an owl of some kind and I also found two tea pots I hadn't seen before, lots of brooches and other jewellery, postcards, pottery etc. etc.

There's even a snickle called Ogleford which means Owl's Ford.

I recommend York.



# Bad News - Please Read

The British Post Office have just announced a new price structure which is going to cost us a lot more money from Monday. I am hoping to get this issue posted on Saturday.

Up to now, I have been able to send this newsletter by 'printed paper' rate, which cost 52p (pence) to Zone 1 (America etc.), 58p to Zone 2 (Australia etc.) and 34p to Europe. This service now has a minimum charge for these destinations of £1.01, £1.13 and 58p, so we will have to go over to letter post, which costs 92p, £1.02 and 45p. You can see that this is an increase of £1.60 a year (about $3) for America and so on. Subscriptions will have to go up to $9 for America, $11 (American $) or £5.50 for Australia etc. and £3 for Europe. Britain will remain at £2.50 as inland charges have changed very little.

It also means that I am going to be very out of pocket on the remaining time of existing subscriptions, particularly those that have only just been paid for the next year.

I don't know what to do.

Perhaps it would be cheaper to send all the American and Australian issues to one member in each country who would add stamps to the envelopes and post them within that country. The club would of course pay for the stamps.

If any American or Australian member would be willing to do this could they please find out how much postage within the country would be and write to me. It would only take an hour

or so every three months and although the club couldn't pay I promise an owl gift with each bunch of newsletters!

Any suggestions? Any other ideas?

I'm very upset about this and sorry to have to ask you.

Your friend, Elise.